

Notes to editor: ENERGY STAR is typed in all caps. The first use of ENERGY STAR is followed by the ® symbol, superscript. See the second sentence for an example.

Total Home Energy Improvements

Ken and Carol liked the 1950's Dutch-colonial they had recently remodeled, but the house was very drafty, there were cold spots in rooms and they were paying \$280/month for heating. With recommendations from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) ENERGY STAR® program, Ken and Carol made some total home energy improvements.

ENERGY STAR is a government-backed program helping businesses and individuals protect the environment through superior energy efficiency. Last year alone, Americans, with the help of ENERGY STAR, saved enough energy to power 20 million homes and avoid greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to those from 18 million cars - all while saving \$9 billion.



EPA's recommendations typically fall into two categories: customized home improvements and purchasing energy efficient products and homes. When the time has come to replace an appliance, lighting, windows or your heating and cooling equipment, ENERGY STAR makes it easy to choose energy efficient products. Just ask for products that have earned the ENERGY STAR. If you are looking for a new home, you can even buy one that has earned the ENERGY STAR. But if you plan to stay in your current home, like Ken and Carol, making energy efficiency improvements now allows you to maximize the benefits of improved comfort and energy cost savings.

"To find out what improvements are best for your home start with a whole-house evaluation", says David Lee, Director of ENERGY STAR Residential programs. "A whole-house evaluation, by a qualified contractor will identify where specific improvements are needed."

As Ken and Carol learned, a common problem in many homes is air leakage. Air leakage from cracks and gaps throughout the home can equal as much airflow as leaving a window open. These leaks cause your heating and cooling equipment to work harder, costing you more to keep your home comfortable. The home energy professional who evaluated Ken and Carol's home used a big fan mounted in the front door, called a "blower door", to pressurize the house and determine the location and amount of leakage.

Another common problem identified in Ken and Carol's home was not enough insulation. During the whole-house evaluation the contractor checked levels of insulation, as well as the condition of windows, and the heating and cooling system. He also used computer software to determine what improvements would be most cost-effective and estimate potential energy cost savings. Ken and Carol received a customized report detailing practical improvements for their home.

One of the improvements Ken and Carol decided to go with was ENERGY STAR Home Sealing. ENERGY STAR Home Sealing is a process for improving the "envelope" of the home — the outer walls, ceiling, windows and floors. EPA recommends:

- Adding insulation to stay comfortable during cold winter nights and hot summer days;
- Sealing air leaks to stop drafts and get the full performance from insulation; and
- Choosing ENERGY STAR labeled windows when replacing old windows.

The whole process was easy for Ken and Carol because the contractor who performed the whole-house evaluation was also qualified to make the improvements. Once all the work was done, the contractor verified that all the combustion appliances, including the couple's hot water heater, was working properly.

For more information about total home energy improvements visit www.energystar.gov.